

# RMRU

**RIVERSIDE MOUNTAIN RESCUE UNIT**

# NEWSLETTER

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## Volume XXV, Issue III, March 1989

### SEARCH & RESCUE

#### CALL

**Mission No. 8907C**

**4 March, Sat.  
Ramona Bowl area,  
Hemet**

The RMRU was called to a mission at the Ramona Bowl, in the hills south of Hemet, but was called off before the team began to roll. • RMRU

#### SEARCH

**Mission No. 8908M**

**13-15 March, Mon.-Wed.  
Death Valley**

*By Steve Bryant*

Around 4 pm on March 10, 1989, an abandoned blue Ford Tempo with North Dakota plates was found near by Highway 190 near the Beatty cutoff in Death Valley National Monument. The registered owner is Roy J. Hagel from Bismark, ND. A wallet and car keys were found on the seat of the car with identification belonging to Roy Hagel.

Cowboy boot tracks were found leading from the vehicle into the desert. It is not absolutely certain that Mr. Hagel was the person who left the tracks leading from the car into the desert, but that was the working hypothesis. A quick search of the area was made the evening of March 10 by Park Service employees. Other search teams with helicopter support started searching the next day.

Monday, March 13, RMRU received a call to assist in the search. RMRU members Dona Halcrow, Ray Hussey, Victor Caro and Steve Bryant responded that evening and we arrived at the DVNM ranger station at 12:15 am Tuesday morning. After sleeping fitfully because of high winds, we had a briefing at 0600 Tuesday, March 14. Hussey and Caro had Assignment No. 8,

which was to search from the Beatty cutoff to the base of the mountains due east, then move about ¼ mile north and search due west back to the Beatty cutoff. This involved an approximate 10 mile hike across the desert. Bryant and Halcrow had Assignment No. 6, and searched from the Keane Wonder Mine due south to Highway 190, about 8 miles across rocky desert. The hiking was a lot of fun — the scenery can't be beat (even though it was a very poor year for flowers) and the weather was nice and cool — but none of the search teams found any hint of Roy Hagel during the day. Other searchers included Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) teams from Sierra Madre, China Lake, San Diego and Altadena, as well as several non-MRA teams. We do thank Steve DeJesus from Landells Aviation for a great job of flying.

After the daytime assignments were completed, Bryant and Halcrow were assigned a quick job to search for tracks along the berm of the Beatty cutoff (DV route 4). They found tracks of cowboy boots along the berm which apparently matched the boot tracks found near Mr. Hagel's car. Even with the help of a tracking dog from the California Rescue Dog Association (CARDAs), we couldn't follow the tracks for more than a mile. Halcrow, Hussey

and Caro returned home Tuesday night; Bryant stayed and had another beautiful, though fruitless, hike through 5 miles of desert Wednesday before driving home.

All in all, a lot of time and money was spent doing a very thorough search, but we didn't find Mr. Hagel. There were rumors that he wanted to disappear after breaking up with a girlfriend, and this writer thinks he probably hitchhiked out of the monument and is sitting somewhere in a bar with D. B. Cooper. • RMRU

#### SEARCH

**Mission No. 8909M**

**14-16 March, Tues.-Thurs.  
Desert Divide area,  
San Jacinto Mountains**

*By Rob Gardner*

This brief story is about a tri-athlete that beat the odds. David Charles Adams, age 33, had gone on a solo hike to Tahquitz Peak and a search was initiated when his wife reported him over-due. The search built up to include all RMRU people in search teams on the desert divide and Tahquitz Peak area, a regional call-out of



RMRU PHOTO BY DONA HALCROW

AIR SUPPORT — Steve DeJesus of Landells Aviation prepares to land to give water and food to search teams.

the California Mountain Rescue Association, and aerial search by helicopter.

Ultimately, David was helped out of the mountains by a passing hiker. He reported the following: He had entered the mountain on a Tuesday, via the South Ridge Trail, hiked to Tahquitz Peak, and camped there as planned. On day two he hiked towards Laws Meadow, where he camped that night. At this point, he had strayed from his planned route into the adjacent area. Therefore, the first day of the search had not expanded to where David actually had gone.

On day three the "adventure" began, when David fell and injured his left ankle. He was near Tahquitz Creek, when he leaned on a branch that broke away, resulting in the fall, and the injury, that immobilized him. His exact location, by his report, was near the "impassible falls" at Tahquitz narrows. He bravely crawled out to the south side ridge, where he could over-look the city of Palm Springs in the distance.

On day four he tried to get to an open spot and near a source of water. On the fifth day he scrambled to a higher ridge, built smoke fires all morning, running out of wood in the afternoon. At dark he could hear the search helicopter, but he had run out of wood to signal with.

At this point David was weak from lack of food and his spirits were down. He was beginning, for the first time, to feel fear.

On day six, he gathered himself up and began to crawl back toward Humber Park, staying to the south side of the valleys. He got to the Willow Creek - Long Valley sign post in the evening and camped there.

Day seven (of the planned two-day hike) David made his way to Humber Park where a good citizen and fellow hiker

detoured from his own plans to assist him from Saddle Junction, down the mountain, and then drove him to the Idyllwild U.S. Forest Service office.

An ordeal with a good outcome. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY DONA HALCROW  
HAPPY ENDING — Carter, left, chats with RMRU members Joe Erickson and Pat Tillman.

## SEARCH

Mission No. 8910M

21 March, Tues.  
Tahquitz Canyon

By Rob Gardner

On March 21, 1989, a young man named Carter was rescued from Tahquitz Canyon by RMRU members and flown out of the canyon by helicopter.

Carter was one day over-due to his destination. He was on a two day hike from Humber Park in Idyllwild, to Palm Springs, via U.S. Forest Service Trails and with a final hike-out by way of Tahquitz Canyon.

Carter had become stranded at the three-thousand foot level in Tahquitz Canyon. He was in good condition when located at 3:30 p.m. by aerial search. Carter stood on a large boulder and signalled to the helicopter by waving a red bivouac sack. The Landells Aviation helicopter was piloted by Steve DeJesus, with RMRU members Kevin Walker and Rob Gardner on board.

A one runner landing on a boulder was performed to deploy Rob who then hiked up the canyon to where Carter was stranded. Rob guided Carter back to the boulder where the helicopter returned and Kevin assisted Carter into the helicopter while Steve held the ship in a hover over the boulder. They then proceeded on

to the base camp at Ann Dolley's by the mouth of Tahquitz Canyon, where Carter told his story to the Sheriff's deputy and the RMRU members. Carter said, "Thanks for rescuing my darn fool neck". In turn the rescuers pointed out that it was easy to find him when he was overdue, as he had left a good map of his planned route and had remained on his route. • RMRU

## SEARCH

Mission No. 8911M

22-23 March, Wed.-Thurs.  
Devil's Slide

A call came late in the evening for a search for an overdue hiker. Phillip Bowman (age 40) had planned to hike from Humber Park to Tahquitz Peak and return and had not shown up.

After leaving a note on Phillip's car at Humber Park, Bill Blaschko, Bud White and Mike Wimbrow started a check of the trail to the peak. Behind them came Henry Negrete, Alan Ewert and Pat Tillman to search the Skunk Cabbage area and beyond. Remaining in base were John Dew and Dona Halcrow, with J.R. Muratet and Cliff Benton as backup. A concern was a slick and icy trail from Saddle Junction to Tahquitz Peak, with a lot of ice and snow in the chutes below the peak.

After searching for about four hours without any sign of Phillip, both teams decided to bivouac, and try again at first light. Just as Henry, Alan and Pat were settling in for a rest in the Willow Creek area, a man came walking along the trail to their camp. When questioned, the man responded that yes, he was Phillip Bowman.

Phillip had become lost on the return trip from the peak, and had wandered throughout the rest of the night. When he encountered the searchers, he was cold and hungry but otherwise okay. After a warming drink, and the loan of some warm clothing, he was able to hike out.

Everyone returned to base in time for a nice breakfast at Jan's Red Kettle in Idyllwild, and then home for some sleep. • RMRU

## CALL

Mission No. 8912C

25 March, Sat.  
Mexico

The RMRU was called and put on standby to respond to a mission in Mexico, but it was completed before the team began to roll. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY DONA HALCROW

BACK HOME — After a very long week, David Adams and his wife return to base camp for a de-briefing.



## SEARCH

**Mission No. 8913M**

**27-29 March, Mon.-Wed.  
Tahquitz Canyon**

Jennifer Isbell, 27 years of age, went to the U.S. Forest Service Office in Idyllwild, on Friday, March 24th and got a permit to camp in the San Jacinto high country. Mary Bowman, USFS employee and RMRU member, told Jennifer to expect bad weather. Nonetheless, Ms. Isbell started hiking up the Devil's Slide trail late in the afternoon, and got to Saddle Junction about dark and in light rain. She wandered around trying to find a campsite, and finally put up her tent and went to bed about 8:30. The rain increased in intensity throughout Friday night, and turned to sleet when Ms. Isbell got up on Saturday.

Saturday morning, she tried to pack up and head back down the trail to Idyllwild, but became confused about directions and went down the east slope from Saddle Junction. She eventually got to Reed's Meadow sometime Saturday morning, and tried to pitch her tent in the sleet and snow. However, she had problems with the tent. She finally got in the tent and cooked and ate some hot soup. She also had trouble with her stove, and was getting ever colder and wetter since her equipment could not handle such weather conditions. Early Saturday afternoon, she wrote a note, saying she was going to follow the creek downstream. She changed into the last dry clothes she had, and took off, leaving all her equipment and the

note in the soaked tent at Reed's Meadow. She wandered through Law's Camp, and then went cross country to Caramba. She saw the "Impassable Falls Ahead" sign just below Caramba on Monday, but decided she didn't have the strength to go back uphill. She also thought she could conquer any obstacles ahead, since she had already gotten this far. So she took off down Tahquitz Canyon. Late Monday, she came to a waterfall that she didn't want to go down, so she used a rock shelter for the night. Fortunately, Tahquitz Canyon receives little wind except gentle warm updrafts from the desert floor, so the temperatures were very moderate. On Tuesday, Jennifer stayed put in the canyon, moving about to keep warm. She heard the helicopter flying to the west of her, but she was hidden in the shadows of the canyon at the time. When she heard a helicopter again on Wednesday morning, she quickly got on top of a large whitish boulder right in the sun in the bottom of the canyon.

Ms. Isbell was reported missing by a friend on Monday, March 27, and the Riverside County Sheriff personnel called RMRU. Teams from RMRU searched with helicopter support, Monday night and Tuesday morning. On Tuesday, a Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) call-out was initiated and searchers arrived from San Diego, China Lake, Sierra Madre, Joshua Tree and Altadena Search and Rescue teams. There were also members of California Rescue Dog Association (CARDA) with their dogs.

The search area was broadened on Tuesday, March 28, when virtually all of Jen-

nifer's equipment and tent were found in Reed's Meadow, along with an undated note.

Early Wednesday morning, a Hughes 500E helicopter from the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Office arrived at the Keenwild base. Pilot Sgt. Vic Brimmer and Dep. Bill Fertig rode in front, while RMRU member Steve Bryant rode in back. The plan was for Steve to give the pilot and spotter a tour of the high country and upper Tahquitz Canyon. Then the helicopter would drop Steve off at the Caramba South helispot. The next load was to bring in the tracking dog and handler to Caramba South. After showing Vic and Bill the major features of the high country South of Wellman's divide, they flew about a mile down Tahquitz Canyon. Within five minutes, Deputy Fertig had spotted Jennifer waving on a big rock in the bottom of the canyon. Deputy Fertig told her through the loudhailer to STAY PUT and KEEP WARM while the helicopter went back to base. The helicopter then returned to get the technical equipment and people it would take to get her up the side of the canyon to a helispot.

At base, RMRU member Cameron Robbins got in the helicopter and was flown to the canyon. They made their way down through the rocks and extremely thick brush to Ms. Isbell. After making sure that her condition was stable, they moved her to a helispot and she was airlifted to Keenwild heliport. She was then transported to Hemet Valley Hospital for observation, and released that same day. • RMRU

## TRAINING

### TRAINING

**Joint Technical**

**4 March, Sat.  
Fossil Falls,  
Highway 395**

*By Dona Halcrow*

Fossil Falls is a deep, volcanic canyon near Little Lake on Highway 395. It is ideal for a training site, because it has cliffs of a couple of hundred feet high, with overhangs, cracks and other assorted problems to practice technical rescue.

RMRU participated with several other teams from the California Region of the Mountain Rescue Association in this joint training. We were judged by Dick Sale, a member of Sierra Madre Search and Rescue, and several of our senior mem-

bers acted as judges for some of the other teams.

A system was set up, directed by Glenn Henderson, as Operations Leader, and Bill Blaschko was lowered to assess the situation. An injured climber was found on a ledge, and first aid was started. Rick Pohlers was then lowered with the litter, and Bill and Rick then put the person in the litter, strapped him in, and he was raised. When the top of the cliff was reached, the rest of the team could see that our "person" was a 200 lb., Army green "dummy" used for military testing.

A good training, a good chance to see other teams in action, and practice our own procedures. • RMRU



RMRU PHOTO BY DONA HALCROW

AN MRA Team in action on the canyon rim.